

Southwest View

Dentist turns to the canvas

Christopher Lim dreamed of being a painter as a child

By ERIKA BAYER-POLAK

VIEW STAFF WRITER

Christopher Lim struggled throughout his formative years deciding on whether to become a doctor or an artist.

He finally chose to become a dentist.

Now that he has opened his own practice, Hillside Dental, 6015 S. Fort Apache Road, Suite 130, Lim is getting in touch with his artistic side. The dentist is in the process of painting a 5-foot-by-10-foot, Hawaiian-themed mural on a wall in the exam area.

"I think it will bring relaxation to the patients," Lim, 29, said.

The young man became intrigued with painting at the age of 9. Originally from Cambodia, he spent four years in a refugee camp with his family in Thailand.

"There was a man who offered painting classes at the refugee camp and I went and watched a lot," he said. "But

when you leave your country you lose everything. Most people were poor and couldn't afford to take the class. But I got really interested in the colors and everything. Every day I just watched."

Lim and his family moved to the United States in 1989, and Lim's interest in art steadily grew.

When the time came to seriously consider his career choices and enter college, he felt that he had to choose a medical field because he couldn't bare a future in which he couldn't support himself and a family.

"I knew I wanted to be a doctor," Lim said. "You get to use your hands, that was important. I thought I'd be a great dentist because I have a great pair of hands. I thought it would put me ahead of my colleagues."

To Lim, dentistry is an art form.

"You can have good brains, but it comes down to your

hands," he said. "You can have all the brains, but if you can't drill a tooth with a steady hand, you're not a good dentist. And I have the hands."

Lim has continued to paint since childhood.

"I won some contests in high school and had a showing in college," he said.

And, more recently, besides working on a mural in his own practice, he painted six murals in exam rooms of a fellow dentist in Henderson, at Star Brite Dental.

Lim's wife, Kay Huynh, understands how strong his feelings are toward both of his

► SEE LIM PAGE 12AA

Page 12AA • Wednesday, November 9, 2005

a

► LIM: Dentist/painter likes Thomas Kinkade

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7AA

interests.

"It is really tough for him," Huynh, a registered nurse, said. "He loves dentistry and art. But I think he has incorporated both without noticing it."

Dentistry mandates an artistic quality, she said.

"He has to be familiar with the natural shapes of teeth to the point that he can re-create them," Huynh said. To be able to create a beautiful smile is an artistic feat. You have to know the proportions, you don't want them to look like Chiclets."

Although Lim thoroughly enjoys intertwining his day job with his hobby, he still feels torn.

"Part of me feels like that's where I belong, in the art world. I feel inspired when I talk to other artists."

But, on the other hand, Lim feels like an amateur painter, not confident enough to show his art on a regular basis.

He paints landscapes. For some time Lim's inspiration came from the Public



SPECIAL TO VIEW

Christopher Lim has created many landscape paintings, but still feels like an amateur painter.

Broadcasting Service series "The Joy of Painting" featuring Bob Ross — yes, the guy with the Afro and exceptionally soothing voice.

"I like Thomas Kinkade, I like that kind of work," he said. "I just think it is fun and relaxing."

Lim admitted to needing some relaxation time after a

day at the office, and painting is often the source of solitude.

He practices all general forms of dentistry, but he is trying to guide his business towards cosmetic dentistry.

"Like white fillings and teeth whitening. Changing someone's smile. The more artistic work," he said grinning.